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22 FEB 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy to the DCI for the Intelligence Community

FROM : Deputy Director for Management and Services  
 SUBJECT : Coping with the Information Handling Problem  
 REFERENCE : D/DCI/IC Memorandum to the DCI, dated 8 February 1974, same subject

1. I have read your proposal in the reference with great interest. Certainly at first glance the proposition to eliminate duplication and redundancy by developing a single intelligence information system would seem to have merit. I am somewhat cautious in evaluating your proposal because of this Agency's previous experience in participating in large-scale information systems intended to serve the needs of a broad spectrum of users. The history of COINS seems to be an example of this. This effort to apply an integrated information approach to only a portion of the total Intelligence Community information is far from being successful. One of the reasons, certainly, is the parochial attitudes of the agencies involved which result all too frequently in the provision of obstacles rather than solutions. I fear this human tendency would also apply to your proposal.

2. Another lesson which I think is to be learned from our previous experiences is that an effort to impose a single solution fails if there is no budgetary control over the project. Successful action still tends to follow the dollar and if all we provide is a structure at the DCI level which carries with it no financial clout, the fate of your recommendation may be the same as those previous experiences.

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3. Also worthy of mention are two minor aspects which may cause problems. The Agency's security interests, which call for compartmentation and dissemination on a need-to-know basis, frequently run counter to the desires of the Department of Defense to disseminate intelligence to the tactical level. This could be a stumbling block in implementation of any system, for while there are solutions to almost every security problem, it is almost impossible to solve them if the environment which presents the problem is ever-expanding. Secondly, there may be some values which can be realized from the competitive aspects of the development of different information systems and system components to meet specific needs.

4. There is already in existence, as you well know, one mechanism which could play an enhanced role in meeting your objective. I refer to the Information Handling Committee of the USIB. While this Committee does not possess a charter as broad as your proposal, its charter could be modified to take into account some of the recommended activities. The Committee could address itself to selected aspects of the information handling situation in the Intelligence Community, supported by the prestige of the DCI. This way we could proceed a step at a time toward identifying and solving problems using an already existing mechanism. This would also have the advantage of not requiring the discontinuance of existing developmental projects until a major overall study was completed. I think this last point is very desirable because the agencies concerned will inevitably suffer a considerable loss of momentum in the solution of their information handling problems.

HAROLD L. BROWNMAN  
Deputy Director  
for  
Management and Services

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